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March 15, 2005

Mr. David Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
United States Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

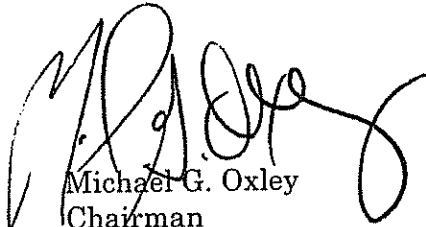
Pursuant to its responsibility and authority under rules X and XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Financial Services is continuing its oversight of the Nation's housing market and potential barriers to home ownership. For the millions of Americans who buy and sell homes every year, promoting robust competition in real estate brokerage services has the potential to create greater choices and produce significantly lower costs. Accordingly, we are writing to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) survey the state of price competition in the market for real estate brokerage services.

As part of your review, please address the following specific issues:

1. What is the size of the residential real estate market in the United States, calculated according to the number of real estate closings settled last year; the number of licensed real estate agents currently operating in the United States; and the cumulative value of the property sold last year.
2. Home prices have steadily increased in many U.S. cities. Please compare the increase in housing prices with the rate of inflation in the U.S. over the past five years.
3. In those States that have authorized state-chartered depository institutions to engage in real estate brokerage and settlement services, have any negative effects on competition or consumers been observed?
4. What benefit, if any, is there for consumers from competition in the residential real estate brokerage market?

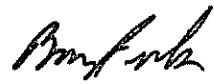
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Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. Please feel free to direct any questions about this request to Jim Clinger or Erika Jeffers of the Committee staff.



Michael G. Oxley
Chairman

Yours truly,



Barney Frank
Ranking Member